

## **PRESENT SCENARIO OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Although India has a rich and long history of environmental laws dating back to the 1970s, it still ranks very low on air and water pollution levels compared to the rest of the world resulting in higher rates of infant mortality and lower life expectancy rates. Poor sanitation conditions and sewage problems compound the problem affecting the health of ordinary citizens in India. The reasons for this disconnect between enlightened environmental laws and high levels of pollution could be traced to lax enforcement of existing environmental laws, discrepancies in the environmental guidelines for businesses to follow between the central government and at the state levels, and the existence of a large number of SMEs who neither have the resources nor the technical skills to adhere to the existing environmental laws.

**Keywords** – Environmental Issues, SMES, NGO's, Natural Hazards

## **INTRODUCTION**

India is drawing the world's attention, not only because of its population explosion but also because of its prevailing as well as emerging health profile and profound political, economic and social transformations. After 54 years of independence, a number of urban and growth-orientated developmental programs having been implemented, nearly 716 million rural people (72% of the total population), half of which are below the poverty line (BPL) continue to fight a hopeless and constantly losing battle for survival and health.

In the past two decades, by instituting an open trade policy and improving its financial market development, India has been able to achieve phenomenal economic growth (Agrawal, 2015 and Pradhan, Arvin, and Norman, 2015). There are many environmental issues in India. Air pollution, water pollution, garbage, and pollution of the natural environment are all challenges for India.

### **Causes of Disorder in the Environment -**

#### **1. Earthquakes**

An earthquake is a tremor of various intensity in the earth's surface caused by the action of the end genetic forces of the earth. It causes immense damage to life and property of the region if its intensity is measured over 7 on the Richter scale. Studies have shown that over 60% of the country's area conies under the moderate and high seismic zones. In the past a number of devastating earthquakes have been caused of which the memories of Koyana (1967), Latur (1993), and Bhuj (2001) are fresh in our mind. (For earthquakes please read para 2.6 of chapter 2 of this book).

Tsunamis-Earthquake measuring more than 7 on Richter scale in the sea bed may produce high sea waves called tsunamis. Such tsunamis caused due to the earthquake near Sumatra coast on 26th Dec. 2004 led to a loss of more than 1.5 lakh people in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.

## **2. Floods**

The submergence of land through a temporary rise in river, lake or sea levels is called flood. It may be caused by increased rainfall, snow-melt, and high tide coinciding with a storm surge, the collapse of a dam or by movement of the land. According to Rashtriya Barn Ayog (National Commission on Floods) about 40 m. ha. Of the country's area comes under flood-prone area (cf. 25 mha in 19603 and 34 mha in 1978). Major part of this area is affected by river floods mainly spreading over the Ganga basin, the Brahmaputra basin (comprising the Barak.

## **3. Cyclones**

Cyclones, mostly tropical cyclones/disturbances, cause immense damage to life and property of the coastal areas of Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. These cyclones are developed in the open seas of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea and are more frequented during pre and post monsoon periods.

## **4. Droughts and Famines**

Drought is basically a distress situation caused by the failure of rainfall. This failure may be due to insufficient rain or due to wide gap between two or more spells of rains. Droughts are of three types. A meteorological drought is a situation when the actual rainfall is significantly less than the climatologically expected rainfall over a wide area. Here the rains do not arrive in time and are not received in adequate quantity. Such droughts are mainly concentrated in the areas falling between arid and semiarid zones of the country and are characterized by high variability of rainfall.

## **Major Issues**

### **Population growth and environmental quality**

There is a long history of study and debate about the interactions between population growth and the environment. According to a British thinker Malthus, for example, a growing population exerts pressure on agricultural land, causing environmental degradation, and forcing the cultivation of land of poorer as well as poorer quality. This environmental

degradation ultimately reduces agricultural yields and food availability, causes famines and diseases and death, thereby reducing the rate of population growth.

### **Water pollution**

India has major water pollution issues. Discharge of untreated sewage is the single most important cause for pollution of surface and ground water in India. There is a large gap between generation and treatment of domestic waste water in India. The problem is not only that India lacks sufficient treatment capacity but also that the sewage treatment plants that exist do not operate and are not maintained. The majority of the government-owned sewage treatment plants remain closed most of the time due to improper design or poor maintenance or lack of reliable electricity supply to operate the plants, together with absentee employees and poor management. The waste water generated in these areas normally percolates in the soil or evaporates. The uncollected wastes accumulate in the urban areas cause unhygienic conditions and release pollutants that leaches to surface and ground water.

### **Air pollution**

Air pollution in India is a serious issue with the major sources being fuel wood and biomass burning, fuel adulteration, vehicle emission and traffic congestion. Air pollution is also the main cause of the Asian brown cloud, which is causing the monsoon to be delayed. India is the world's largest consumer of fuel wood, agricultural waste and biomass for energy purposes. Traditional fuel (fuel wood, crop residue and dung cake) dominates domestic energy use in rural India and accounts for about 90% of the total. In urban areas, this traditional fuel constitutes about 24% of the total. Fuel wood, agri waste and biomass cake burning releases over 165 million tonnes of combustion products into India's indoor and outdoor air every year. These biomass-based household stoves in India are also a leading source of greenhouse emissions contributing to climate change.

### **Solid waste pollution**

Trash and garbage is a common sight in urban and rural areas of India. It is a major source of pollution. Indian cities alone generate more than 100 million tons of solid waste a year. Street corners are piled with trash. Public places and sidewalks are despoiled with filth and litter,

rivers and canals act as garbage dumps. In part, India's garbage crisis is from rising consumption. India's waste problem also points to a stunning failure of governance.

### **Noise pollution**

Noise pollution or noise disturbance is the disturbing or excessive noise that may harm the activity or balance of human or animal life. Noise-wise India can be termed as the most polluted country in the world. The source of most outdoor noise worldwide is mainly caused by machines and transportation systems, motor vehicles, aircraft, and trains. In India the outdoor noise is also caused by loud music during festival seasons. Outdoor noise is summarized by the word environmental noise. Poor urban planning may give rise to noise pollution, since side-by-side industrial and residential buildings can result in noise pollution in the residential areas.

### **Land or Soil pollution**

In March 2009, the issue of Uranium poisoning in Punjab attracted press coverage. It was alleged to be caused by fly ash ponds of thermal power stations, which reportedly lead to severe birth defects in children in the Faridkot and Bhatinda districts of Punjab. The news reports claimed the uranium levels were more than 60 times the maximum safe limit. In 2012, the Government of India confirmed<sup>^</sup> that the ground water in Malwa belt of Punjab has uranium metal that is 50% above the trace limits set by the United Nations' World Health Organization.

### **Environmental Regulations in India**

Indian government has shown some foresight in the area of environmental concerns by enacting legislations meant to protect the environment. India has about two hundred laws dealing with environmental protection ([www.cpreec.org](http://www.cpreec.org)). India's environmental regulations date back to the 1970s. The first important regulation enacted was the Water Act of 1974 followed by the Air Act of 1981. These acts created the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) responsible for data collection and policy enforcement. It also developed detailed procedures for environmental compliance at the central government level. Simultaneously/a second control board at the state level called State Pollution Control Board (CPCB) was also

established to collect data and for policy enforcement at the state level. These were followed by other regulations meant to protect the environment. India's key policies relating to environmental protection are governed by:

- The national forest policy, 1988;
- Policy statement for abatement of pollution, 1992; and
- National conservation strategy and policy statement on environment and development, 1992. Hence, it is clear that the current environmental problems in India are not due to a lack of legislation, but there appears to be other factors that are contributing to the current situation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The rapid economic growth experienced by India is resulting in adverse and harmful environmental conditions that are affecting the people of India as well the wider global population. In the case of India, this is further exacerbated by the high population density and growth rates. The existing environmental laws, although cover a wide spectrum of environmental concerns, they seem to be ineffective due to lack of enforcement, the lack of resources, and technical challenges faced by a large number of Indian companies, especially the SMEs. Under these conditions, India has to adopt some sustainable actions that need to address the myriad issues facing the country including environmental degradation in order to sustain its prospects for continued economic growth (Ranganath, 2015).

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